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[FOURTH EDITION]

"WHAT IS THE TRUTH?"

OR,

PILATE'S QUESTION ANSWERED

IN A

Scriptural Exposition

OF THE

GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM.

BY JOHN THOMAS, M.D.,

Author of "ELPIS ISRAEL," "EUREKA," etc.

1871.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

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WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

THE Anglo-Saxon word GOSPEL is *euanghelion* in the Greek. This is a word compounded of *eu*, an adverb of quality, signifying "good;" and *anghelia*, "a message delivered in the name of any one:" *euanghelion*, therefore, signifies "a good message, which becomes "good news" to those previously unacquainted with it. It is styled "the gospel of God" (Rom. i. 1); because it is a good message, emanating from Him. It is also called "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God" (1 Tim. i. 11); because it is a good message of future glory, on account of which all who partake in it will call Him blessed. It announces a good time coming, when "the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii. 14); for Jehovah sware to Moses, saying, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah."—(Num. xiv. 21). This is good news of glory from God to everyone who believes it.

God's gospel is styled "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. iv. 23; xxiv. 14; Mark i. 14, 15; Luke viii. 1); because He purposes to manifest His glory and blessedness through a kingdom He declares He will set up in the land lying between the Euphrates, Mediterranean, and Nile.

The gospel of the kingdom, and "the great salvation spoken by the Lord," are the same thing. This is evident from the fact that the Lord Jesus, when he began to preach, did not make two separate proclamations. Throughout his ministry, he preached but one thing, which is variously expressed in the history of his career. Sometimes it is simply styled "the gospel" (Mark i. 15; viii. 35; xiii. 10; Luke iv. 18); at others, "the kingdom of God" (Luke iv. 43; ix. 2, 6); and Peter, in recalling the recollection of it to Cornelius'

mind, says, "That Word ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached."—(Acts x. 37). In the previous verse he reminded him who began to preach this word from Galilee, and speaks of it as a message. His words are, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all: that word I say ye know." When we turn to the history "of all that Jesus began both to do and teach," we find that when he began to speak the great salvation, he commenced preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God in Galilee. The following is the testimony: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness"—(Matt. iv 12, 17, 23.) The word sent, the gospel of the kingdom, and the great salvation, it is clear, all began to be preached by Jesus at the same time, and in the same region of country; they must, therefore, and can only be, the same thing under different modes of speech. A word sent is a MESSAGE; that word sent by Jesus Christ constitutes Him THE MESSENGER (Mal. iii. 1): a messenger sent of God with good news to the childern of Israel about a kingdom, which they did not then possess, preaches that kingdom to them as a matter of promise, and therefore of hope; so that the gospel of the kingdom is also styled "THE HOPE OF ISRAEL," for which Paul says he was "bound with a chain."—(Acts xxviii. 20.)

The kingdom of God is the great salvation, because through that kingdom the blessedness preached to Abraham as the gospel (Gal. iii. 8), is to come upon all the nations of the earth, and by which they are to be saved from the power of those who destroy them, and to be placed under a righteous administration of divine law. God's kingdom is to save them; for it is to "grind to powder and bring to an end all kingdoms," to fill the whole earth as a great mountain, and itself to stand for ever.—(Dan. ii. 35, 44.) This kingdom can only be set up by overthrowing "the powers that be;" and as there can be no peace and blessedness for the nations until they are broken, the operation which abolishes them, establishes the

destroying STONE POWER, and saves the world with a great and glorious salvation. Who can doubt it, when the Scriptures say, referring to that era: "The King's son, O God, shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment; He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. In His days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the land. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him, and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles (British) shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him [being subdued]: *all nations shall serve him.* His name shall endure for the age; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and they shall be blessed in him—all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the Elohim of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. Blessed be the name of His glory for the age: yea, the whole earth shall be filled with His glory."—(Ps. lxxii.)

The kingdom of God founded by Jehovah and His Christ is to establish this great salvation in the earth—a thorough and complete regeneration of the world. The kingdom is the cause of this; the great salvation the result of its institution in the land promised to the fathers. But the greatness of the salvation is not restricted to the future generations of the nations only; it comprehends, in the magnitude of the deliverance it vouchsafes, the generations of the righteous among the dead from Abel to the coming of Israel's king in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory. It saves the cloud of witnesses, of whom the world was never worthy, with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom; and saves the nations from their temporal miseries and degradations with a joyous and glorious redemption of a thousand years. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" as this?

Now, the Bible reveals no other salvation than this—a deliverance of the righteous from "the pit in which there is no water," by a resurrection from the dead; a transformation of the living saints who may be contemporary with the second advent; a restoration of the kingdom again to Israel under the New Covenant; and a redemption of the nations from the social, civil and spiritual evils

which now press so heavily upon them. This is the only salvation of which the gospel treats. It meets the necessities of the world. Humanity needs no other, and therefore none else has been provided. When the salvation has triumphed, it will be the accomplished fact of a thousand years, during which "the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him. For the kingdom is for Jehovah; and He, the Governor among the nations."—(Ps. xxii. 27, 28.)

When Jesus stood at Cæsar's bar, Pilate asked him: "*Art thou the King of the Jews?*" He answered: "my kingdom is not of this world; if it were, then would my associates fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but my kingdom is not from this now." Pilate therefore said to him: "*Art thou king, then?*" Jesus answered: "Thou sayest; for I am king. I was born for this (*eis touto*), and for this I came into the world, that I might witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice." Pilate said unto him: "*What is truth?*"—(Jno. xviii. 37.) Ah, Pilate, thou, like myriads beside thee, knewest not that voice, though it was witnessed in thy presence. The truth was confessed (1 Tim. vi. 13) before thee, but thou didst not understand it, because thou wast not of the truth. Let the reader hear the voice of the king: "I came into the world that I might witness to the truth." Now hear what he says in another place: "I am sent to preach the kingdom of God."—(Luke iv. 43.) He preached it through the length and breadth of Judea, announcing to the people the kingdom of God, and that he was king thereof. He filled the land with the sound of his claims to the throne of David as the "born King of the Jews."—(Matt. ii. 2.) The people heard him gladly; and, admitting his pretensions to be just, were ready for revolt against Cæsar, and to make him king.—(John vi. 15.) The chief priests became alarmed at the current of the popular mind, and apprehended the interference of the Romans.—(John xi. 48.) They procured his apprehension at length, and accused him before Pilate of perverting the nation from its allegiance to Cæsar (Luke xxiii. 2), and affirming that he was King of the Jews. (John xix. 21.) By the passage above quoted, we find Pilate endeavouring to elicit from him the truth of the matter. As if he said: "They charge you with saying that you are an Anointed One, a king, even the King of the Jews; *is this the*

truth?" Jesus confessed, and denied not, although it was hazardous at the bar of Cæsar, the *de facto* king of the Jews (John xix. 15), to aver that he was himself king by right. His life had been jeopardised thirty-five years and three months before by the inquiry—"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Herod, the reigning king of the Jews, who knew that the nation was expecting the birth of a Son of David, who was to reign over them for ever, was alarmed at the intimation that he was actually born. He saw that the right of David's Son and the interest of the Herodian dynasty were inimical. He therefore determined to destroy him, and so secure the kingdom to his own family by the Christ, or Anointed One's destruction. The same policy was at work at the condemnation of Jesus. Pilate was not only the representative of the Roman Majesty which had superseded the Herodian in Judea; but the conservator of the rights of the reigning Cæsar as King of the Jews. Satisfied that it was mere envy that moved the chief priests to accuse Jesus of treason against the Roman power, his policy was to release him, and to appease their clamour. But the policy of the priests and elders was opposed to this. They saw clearly, that if Jesus ascended the throne of David, he would permit them to have no share in the honours and emoluments of the State. Hence it was with them, as with Herod, all-important to prevent him getting possession of the throne. They saw Pontius Pilate's unwillingness to condemn him, and concluded that the only way they could succeed in overcoming it would be to treat him hypothetically as a partaker in the Nazarene treason, and consequently a traitor to Cæsar's rights, which it was his business to conserve. This was their policy. Hence said they to the Procurator: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." This settled the question in Pilate's mind. Though convinced of the faultlessness of Jesus, and of their malignity, self-preservation was a stronger law of his nature than justice. He concluded that it was better for Jesus to suffer death, though unworthy of it, than that he should lose his procuratorship, and perhaps his life, for misprision of treason. Had Jesus not confessed *the truth*, but repudiated all pretensions to the throne of Israel, Pilate could not have condemned him; nay, would not, for there would have existed no ground upon which the

priests and elders could have predicated his want of friendship or loyalty to Cæsar. It is true they said, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." They regarded this as blasphemy; but the Roman law took no cognisance of questions in Jewish theology. It had ceased to be lawful for the Jews to put any man to death (John xviii. 31), so that, however guilty he might have been of blasphemy in saying that he was the Son of God, neither the Jews nor the Roman law could have taken his life on that account. The good confession, therefore, he made before Pilate—"*the truth*"—to which he testified in his presence, and for which he was condemned and executed—*was not* that he was not the Son of God. Though true, it was not "*the truth*"—it was not the ground of his sentence unto death.

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" Had Jesus replied: "I am the Son of God," it would have been an evasion of the question, as every one not judicially blinded must see. If one were to ask another: "Are you a physician?"—would it be answering the question to say: "I am the son of my father?" King of the Jews is an official dignity; Son of God personal nativity. Who is the King of the Jews? He that says he is the Son of God, or some other person? To assert that he was God's Son did not bring Jesus into collision with Cæsar's rights; but to affirm that he was Christ, a king—that is, the Anointed King of the Jews—constituted him at once Cæsar's rival in Judea.

Though so dangerous a question, Jesus did not equivocate, or seek to evade the hazard it involved. When Pilate said: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" He met his question by referring boldly and immediately to *the truth* about his kingdom. He had been proclaiming this truth from Galilee throughout all Judea to Jerusalem, where he then stood; he had heralded it forth from one end of the land to the other for three years and a-half in fulfilment of his mission; for he came into the world to witness to the truth concerning the kingdom of God, of which he was the christened or anointed king; and he was then prepared, with the full assurance that it would cost him his life, to confess before Pilate that he was the King of the Jews. Pilate so understood him when he said, in answer to his question—"*My kingdom.*" Jesus was a Jew, and a

Jew could have no claim to any kingdom but that of his own nation. King of the Jewish nation. Thus Pilate, the Roman soldiers, the Chief Priests, and Scribes (Mark xv. 31, 32), understood him to confess; and therefore the reason of his condemnation to death. The title he assumed was labelled to his cross in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—"JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

In suffering death because of his claim to the throne of Israel, Jesus, the Son of God and Son of David, sealed "the gospel of the kingdom," and the covenant of that kingdom, with his blood. He was born King of Israel, and he suffered death because he maintained his right to the royalty. He was anointed to be king, and a prophet, to preach the gospel or glad tidings of his reign over the twelve tribes of Israel, and the obedient nations of the earth, for a thousand years. With him and his apostles, to "preach the kingdom of God" was to "preach the gospel." There could be no gospel without the kingdom—even this same particular kingdom, this Jewish kingdom in Palestine, than which the living God has caused to be evangelised no other. A gospel of a kingdom or kingdoms beyond the skies—of an everlasting kingdom there for disembodied ghosts, and a present church-kingdom of grace among carnal, scoffing, faithless professors here—we deliberately, and under pain of eternal damnation, if in error, we boldly, conscientiously, and confidently affirm, that there is no such gospel to be found in the oracles of God. Such a gospel as this—the popular gospel of the age—was never preached to Jew or Gentile by John, Jesus, or the apostles. The Lord of Israel bore witness to no such gospel before Pilate. He did not testify that he was a king of a sky-kingdom; but king of the Jewish nation upon earth, where alone it exists, or ever will exist. His is the royalty of this nation, taking its root in the covenant made with David, which is everlasting, and can never be annulled; for Jehovah hath declared: "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall be for the age, and his throne as the sun before me." —(Ps. lxxxix. 35, 36.)

For three years and a half, Jesus fulfilled his mission as prophet to Israel in preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He began, as we have seen, in Galilee, soon after his being anointed of God with

the Holy Spirit and power. He visited the synagogues, and among them, that at Nazareth. Being there on a certain occasion, he read from the 61st of Isaiah the words recorded in the fourth of Luke. Alluding to his anointing, he read, "The spirit of Jehovah is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; —to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Jehovah's anointing him to preach the gospel is equivalent to saying, Jehovah sent him to preach. There is no necessity to prove this. It is obvious. In sending him, then, to preach the gospel, what was he to preach as the basis of the good news to the poor? This question is answered in two places, in this chapter; he was sent to preach the acceptable year of Jehovah; or, which is the same thing, he was "sent to preach the kingdom of God"—(verse 43). Peter told Cornelius that he was sent to preach this word to the children of Israel. Hence it is styled "the word of the kingdom"—(Matt. xiii. 19)—upon the understanding of which men's salvation is predicated.—(Mark xvi. 15, 16.) But why is the gospel of the kingdom, and the acceptable year of Jehovah, or age to come, preached to the poor, rather than to the rich? The reason is, because "God hath chosen the poor of this world, RICH IN FAITH, to be heirs of that kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him."—(James ii. 5.) "He fills the hungry with good things, and the rich He sends empty away" (Luke i. 53); because the present life is the season of their enjoyment."—(Luke xvi. 25.)

When Paul was writing about "the great salvation which began to be spoken by the Lord" (Heb ii. 1, 5), he says he was speaking about "the future habitable" which is to be subjected to the Son, and not to angels, as it is at present. Speaking of the present habitable, or "civilised" part of the earth, he says: "But now we see *not yet* all things put under him." No; if we did, we should see him king over the whole earth.—(Zec. xiv. 9.) All the kingdoms of the world would be his, and "all nations would serve him."—(Rev. xi. 15.) The future habitable subjected to the Son, is the dominion of the acceptable year of Jehovah; when the kingdom shall be existent in the plenitude of its glory, ruling over all. Jesus and his brethren, all Sons of God, and the Seed of David by adoption, through Jesus, though recipients of evil things in their primary

existence, will possess the dominion of the future habitable "*under* the whole heaven"—not above it, "beyond the skies." This is good news to the poor—the gospel Jesus was anointed to preach; the great salvation confirmed by the apostles who heard it preached; and attested of God by signs, wonders, divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Spirit, manifested through them.

The context of the testimony from which Jesus selected the reading in the synagogue at Nazareth, exhibits the glad tidings or gospel of the kingdom he preached to the meek of the children of Israel. It promises them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." This series of beautiful antitheses presents to us in contrast the present and future states of the poor who receive the gospel of the kingdom. Now, but mourning, heavy-hearted dust and ashes; in the age to come, they shall be beauteous and joyous, giving praise and glory to Jehovah as immortals only can bestow it. With respect to their nation—for the word was primarily sent to Israel—"they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And foreigners shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen, and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah; men shall call you the ministers of our God; ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." Let the enquirer read from the 20th verse of the 59th chapter of Isaiah, to the end of the 62nd chapter, and he will read the good things promised to Israel, and evangelised in the Word sent to them of God by Jesus Christ. They are but a sample of the good things in store for the nation, which, in its future glory, is the Sarah, the princess of nations, the married wife, of its Creator. Then "Jehovah will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord had blessed." This joy and blessedness of the nation is inseparable from the glory of their king. To him, under Jehovah, they will owe all the peace and happiness they enjoy. The rejoicing will be mutual. The nation will rejoice in its king,

and "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall he rejoice over Jerusalem," the Holy City of his realm. In view of the great deliverance Jehovah bestows upon His king, he that was anointed to preach the gospel to Israel says: "I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah: my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations"—when the righteous dead shall bud and spring forth of the earth, to praise and glorify His name.

The Word of the Truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom—though a long title to the message borne by Jesus to the children of Israel—will be easily understood by the enquirer from what has gone before. It imports the Law and the Testimony that sets forth the promises which make the message relating to the kingdom good news. Paul says that "the *hope laid up in heaven*" is reported of in the word of the truth of the Gospel; and therefore he styles it "*the hope of the Gospel;*" and as there is but one true gospel, though many false ones, there is but one true hope, which he terms "*one hope of the calling.*"—(Col. i. 5, 23; Eph. iv. 4.) A hope is something in the future, promised but not possessed. The calling is a particular invitation; and the one hope of the calling, the promised thing to the possession of which you are especially invited. This being the meaning of the phrase, and seeing that the hope belongs to the Gospel, it follows that the Gospel contains an invitation or call to the possession of some particular thing. The one hope of the calling of the Gospel—what is it? Paul says, "God hath called you to His kingdom and glory."—(1 Thess. ii. 12). Then the kingdom and glory are the hope of the called; that is, of those who accept the invitation. The kingdom and glory are the one hope of their calling. The word which God sent to the children of Israel by Jesus Christ, was an invitation to them to possess His kingdom and glory, of which He had said so much in the prophets, upon certain conditions. Jehovah's kingdom and glory, under Messiah's administration, was the great hope of the nation. It was the hope of

Israel, and of Israel alone. No other nation shared with them in this hope. It was the hope of the restoration of the kingdom again to Israel (Acts i. 6), under a new and better covenant than the Mosaic—the hope of the restitution of all things spoken of by the prophets.—(Acts iii. 21.) This is the hope promised to the fathers, and evangelised in the word of the kingdom, and therefore the Gospel's hope, by which we are saved.—(Rom. viii. 24.) Expunge this hope from the Gospel, and it ceases to be Gospel, for it is the hope that makes the tidings glad, and the news good; in short, there would be no tidings to report, if the hope of the kingdom and glory were suppressed.

Jehovah is the accepted king of Israel (1 Sam. xii. 12), and Israel therefore his nation.—(Exod. xix. 6; Isaiah li. 4). He formed it for Himself, that through it He might show forth his praise.—(Isaiah xliii. 21.) The prophet says of Israel: "We are Thine, O Lord; Thou never barest rule over our adversaries: they were not called by Thy name." The kingdom of God is His dominion over this nation. It is, therefore, a JEWISH KINGDOM. Jehovah never owned any other kingdom upon earth. He acquired the Jewish kingdom by creation; and purposes to obtain possession of all other kingdoms by conquest, because they are mere usurpations, and adversaries of His nation. He intends His kingdom to be ruled by a Vicegerent in His name, whom He styles "My king," (Psalm ii. 6), and by him to subdue the world, so that all thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, may become His. This being accomplished, the Twelve Tribes of Israel will constitute "the first dominion" in actual organised possession of their own country—the kingdom proper. This kingdom will rule over all other nations, which in the aggregate will form the secondary dominion or empire. Thus a family of nations will be created, of which Abraham, then risen from the dead, will be the federal father, and Israel, the First Born. (Exodus iv. 22).

This kingdom and dominion which Jehovah and His king are to set up, are to exist unchanged for a thousand years, at the end of which things will occur which do not pertain to the Gospel of the kingdom, though they affect the kingdom itself. The kingdom is imperishable, and non-transferable from one set of rulers to another: "it shall not be left to another people." This is an important

feature in the Gospel. If it could be transferred from hand to hand, then flesh and blood might inherit it; but it cannot be transferred, therefore "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." They who are promoted to the possession of the kingdom at its establishment, are to retain its honours, glory, power and emoluments the whole thousand years, and as long afterwards as it exists, which will be for ever. Can flesh and blood, that dies and turns to dust after three-score years and ten, possess such a kingdom? Impossible. What, then, is indispensable to the inheriting of this kingdom? That the heirs God has chosen to possess it, be made immortal. This necessity God has promised to fulfil in promising to give them "the kingdom under the whole heaven for an age, even for the age and ages." Hence the Gospel call to the kingdom and its glory, is equally a call to eternal life; and the hope of the kingdom, consequently, the hope of eternal life and glory, which are all comprehended in the "Hope of the Gospel," which is said to be "laid up in heaven," and "reserved in heaven," because he who is to convert the hope into a received gift, is there. "Our life," says Paul, "is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, our life, shall appear, *then* shall we also appear with him in glory"—the life, the glory, the kingdom, are all bestowed at one epoch: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST."—(1 Pet. i. 13).

"SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS."—(John iv. 22). And this salvation, which is very great, is announced, through the Gospel of God's Jewish kingdom. The salvation is national—or *kosmical* rather—and *individual.* The salvation of the world of nations through the kingdom, is social, civil and ecclesiastical, or spiritual; and is best perceived by those who comprehend the work of setting-up the kingdom. The obstacles to the world's regeneration must first be removed. These obstacles are "the powers that be." Israel and the saints, under the Captain of Salvation will abolish them. Their removal being effected, "he will speak peace to the nations," which they will joyfully accept, and submitting to his terms, will henceforth "rejoice with His people Israel."—(Deut. xxxii. 43).

All that Jehovah proposes to bestow on men, he intends to impart through this kingdom alone. Hence, if a man obtain the kingdom, he obtains everything; but if he be counted unworthy of it, he

gets nothing. Does he desire eternal life, eternal honour, eternal glory, equality with the angels, wisdom, knowledge, riches, power, and dominion? Let him "seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto him." What said Jesus to his apostles, when Peter asked him what recompense of reward they should have, who had forsaken all and followed him? Did he tell them that, when they died, their disembodied spirits should be borne aloft on angels' wings, to mansions in the skies? Did he tell them they should meet their friends and children there, and feast, and dance, and sing, enraptured in eternal ecstacy? He abused their reason with no such pagan foolishness as this; but said, "Verily I say to you, that ye who have followed me, shall, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."—(Matt. xix. 28.) He promised them a joint rulership with himself in a kingdom, and that kingdom, God's kingdom of the Jews. "Ye are they," said he, "who have continued with me in my trials. And I covenant unto you, as my Father hath covenanted unto me, a kingdom; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel."—(Luke xxii. 28-30.) This was to be their reward in the age to come *(en to aioni to erchomeno)*, with eternal life.—(Mark x. 30.) The kingdom, therefore, was everything to them. Jesus taught them to pray to the Father, saying, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; deliver us from evil, because the kingdom is Thine, the power, and the glory, for the age." He instructed them in the mysteries or hidden things of the kingdom (Matt. xiii. 11); and after he arose from the dead, having opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, he conversed with them during the forty days preceding his ascension, "on the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Under the influence of this divine teaching, they became full of the matter. "The gospel" and "the kingdom" were with them convertible terms. They knew of no gospel without it. The resurrection was the door of entrance into the kingdom. They desired to rise from the dead, that they might possess it; for they knew that if they did not "inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34), there would be for them

neither glory, honour, nor eternal life in the age to come. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at, that the last question they should put to the resurrected king of the Jews before his departure from the earth, should be to know when he would restore again the kingdom to Israel."—(Acts i. 3, 6.) That it would be restored, there was no question; for "the regeneration," or "restitution of all things," was the first principle of Christ's teaching, and of their own faith and preaching afterwards. What they wanted to know was—the time when the restitution of all things belonging to the kingdom of Israel should be accomplished. "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They, doubtless, thought that the time to favour Zion had certainly then come. They knew that Jesus had been put to death for maintaining that he was "the king of the Jews;" and they saw that God approved his claim to David's throne in delivering him from the death he incurred, by confessing his rightful claim to the kingdom. Could any time, then, be more opportune than the present, to call to his aid those "twelve legions of angels," which he said the Father would give him, and at their head, to expel the Romans from Judea, and re-establish Israel's kingdom under his own rule, as the hereditary representative of the house of David, and "King of the Jews?" They were right in expecting the restoration, but they erred in looking for it at that time. All things were not ready. The king was provided, but where was the household?—where were his body-guards?—where were they who were to co-operate with him in the administration of his kingdom and government of the world? Some say, "They were in their graves—to wit, the fathers or saints who had died under the law." "These might have been raised from the dead and associated with Jesus in the kingdom." But it was written in the word: "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."—(Ps. xlv. 16.) This is said to the Messiah, in a psalm which Paul applies to Jesus. Hence, whatever place his fathers may occupy in the kingdom, they will not be its "princes" or chiefs, ruling with Jesus as "Prince of princes," over the nations of the world; besides that, we apprehend there will not be a sufficient number saved, from the generations of Israel previous to the resurrection of the king of the Jews, to supply the administrative demands of the kingdom

under its new constitution, or covenant. That all things were not ready, is represented in the parable of a certain man who made a great supper, and bade many. His object was to *have his house filled*, that his supper might be eaten. He sent invitations to various classes, but though the supper was ready to be partaken of when the first class were invited, the eating of it was deferred until the seats provided were all occupied by guests, procured by several subsequent endeavours to obtain them.—(Luke xiv. 15-24.)

The union of the King of the Jews with the kingdom is the marriage of the king's son; and the sitting at the table in the kingdom—*the possession of it*—is the eating of the marriage supper in the "certain man's house." The kingdom is Jehovah's house, into which He invites guests, that they may partake of the good things therein provided. He wills that *His house shall be filled* by the assembling of all the guests before the supper be eaten. Israel were bidden, being politically "the children of the kingdom." Jehovah called them by His prophets to the life and glory of His kingdom, but they would not harken (Jer. vii. 13); He invited by John, but they made light of it; He sent them a message by Jesus, but they killed him; and lastly, He urged the invitation upon them by the apostles and a great company, but "they entreated them spitefully, and slew them." Thus, with comparatively few exceptions, Israel treated Jehovah's call to His kingdom and glory. His feast of fat things, and wines on the lees well refined, were amply provided, but still they were not sufficient of Israel to occupy the seats. There was still room. The kingdom could not be set up until occupants were provided for the empty places. Seeing, therefore, that Israel turned a deaf ear to the invitations, the apostles were ordered to go to the Gentiles that dwelt in the streets and lanes of the city, and even the highways and hedges of the nations, that the house of the kingdom might be filled with as many as the nature of the case required.

Though the materials of the house were all ready at the resurrection of the King of the Jews, it will be perceived, from what has gone before, that the household had still to be formed. Till this had been formed and reconciled, the kingdom could not be established. It was the work of the apostles and others to collect this household together—to call out from Israel and the nations, a

people numerous enough to fill all the official places of a kingdom that is to rule all the nations, languages and tribes of the earth. The time was not come then, to "restore the kingdom again to Israel" before the ascension. A long time was to elapse before the restitution, to afford scope for the work of separating the heirs of the kingdom from the undistinguished multitude of the world. The King of Israel directed the attention of his ambassadors to this work, instead of gratifying their curiosity about the time of the restoration, which the Father had not thought proper to reveal to them. He told them they should be witnesses for him. They should receive power after the Holy Spirit had come upon them. Thus qualified, they would have to demonstrate that God had raised him from the dead; that he was the man ordained of Jehovah in righteousness, as the prophets had of old declared [Jer. xxiii. 5-8; Ps. xcvi. 13; Dan. vii. 13, 14; Zech. xiv.], and to proclaim *the conditions upon which* both Jews and Gentiles might inherit with him, the kingdom and eternal glory.

What we have said may be regarded as an outline of the great salvation as exhibited in the gospel of the kingdom of God. It can hardly be regarded as anything more, seeing that the Bible, as a whole, is the *Book of the kingdom*, and therefore an exhibition of the gospel in detail. The details of the gospel are set forth under certain heads, summarily styled "*the things of the kingdom.*"—(Acts viii. 12.) The *country* where the kingdom is to be established occupies a distinguished place among the "the things." A great deal is said about it of a highly important and interesting character. Indeed, the testimony concerning the *territory* and *throne* of the kingdom are so intimately connected with the gospel, that a person cannot believe the gospel, and be ignorant of it; for the territory and throne are principal subjects of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the covenant made with David. These are the "*covenants of promise,*" which the ignorant, and, consequently, unbelieving, are "*strangers from.*"—(Eph. ii. 12.) It is useless to talk about believing the gospel, and at the same time to be ignorant of these and of their true import; for they contain the gospel. The writings of the apostles and prophets teach that the territory of the kingdom of the heavens is the land in which Abraham dwelt with Isaac and Jacob, and tended his flocks and

herds; the subjects of the kingdom, Abraham's descendants in the line of Isaac and Jacob; the King, one of his seed, the antitype of Isaac when he died and rose again "in a figure" (Eph. ii. 12); the throne, David's in Zion and Jerusalem; the empire, all nations of the earth in a state of blessedness; the duration of the kingdom, without change "for the age."

The *heaven* that the gospel proclaims is *a heavenly kingdom upon the earth.* The kingdom is heavenly, because it is created and established by the God of heaven, and ruled by a King from heaven, and destined to rule "the heavens," or kingdoms of the world. Because it is God's kingdom, it is sometimes styled a theocracy— a government under the immediate direction of God. The kingdom of Israel was a theocracy, and the gospel kingdom is that theocracy restored under a constitution so amended as to be styled "a new and better covenant." Under the old theocracy, the rulers and ruled were all flesh and blood, and therefore mortal; but under the RESTORED THEOCRACY, the members of the government, and the peers of the realm, with the King, will be immortal; while the people, both of Israel and the nations, will be subject to death, until death shall be abolished at the end of the thousand years.

THE CONDITIONS OR MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL.

"Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the Mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds."—PAUL to the Ephesians.

If a man believe that in the age to come a "kingdom and dominion," such as the gospel exhibits, will exist upon the earth, and that men to whom it has been preached in ages previous to its establishment will rise from the dead to possess it, or to be judged with due severity for refusing to believe what God has revealed concerning it—he will spontaneously inquire: "What must I do that I may inherit glory, honour, and eternal life in the kingdom of God?" This question is equivalent to saying: "What must I do to be saved?"—for, if a man possess these things in that kingdom—that is, "inherit the kingdom"—he is saved from sin, corruptibility, and death; in short, from all evil from which he needs to be delivered. The answer to this question, so transcendantly important to all, is

exhibited in "the Mystery of the Gospel," which may, therefore, be said to contain *the conditions of salvation.*

The gospel of the kingdom, then, has a *mystery* connected with it. By a mystery is meant a thing kept secret, and hid from mankind until revealed. The gospel was preached to Abraham; but its mystery was not preached until the day of Pentecost. The revelation made through Peter on that day, was "the revelation of the mystery," which, says Paul, "was kept secret since the world began."—(Rom. xvi. 25.) The apostolic preaching of Jesus Christ was the revelation of the mystery; the Old Testament exhibition of the truth was, "the gospel of God *promised* afore by the prophets, in the Holy Scriptures." —(Rom. i. 2.) The gospel is revealed there without mystery. The things of the kingdom and the sufferings and resurrection of its king are plainly revealed; but the use to be made of those sufferings in their precise and especial adaptation to the consciences of gospel believers, in giving them the answer of a good conscience towards God, was "the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery"—it was not revealed. It was "the salvation of souls; the initiative of that salvation, which ends in the participation of the joy and glory of the Lord—"a salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, *which are now reported unto you by them who have* preached the gospel unto you . . . which things the angels desired to look into."—(1 Pet. i. 10-12.) But the prophets and angels could not succeed in discovering the secret. It was impenetrable. With all the aid at their command, they could not find it out; for it was a "mystery hidden from the ages and the generations," and intended to be concealed until the time appointed for its manifestation to the saints by the preaching of the apostles.—(Col. i. 26.)

But though the mystery of the gospel ceased to be a secret after the day of Pentecost, it still continued to be called the mystery. This, we apprehend, was to keep before the believer's mind the remembrance of the nature of the things specially pertaining to Jesus, and to his conscience before God, which had been directly revealed to him through the apostles. As if one should say to

another: "I will tell you the secret." He tells it; and referring to it at some future time, he says; "You remember the secret on account of which I have suffered greatly." Here the thing would be called a secret, although it ceased to be such as soon as told.

The mystery is based upon *a few fulfilled* gospel predictions. It was foretold by the prophets, that the King of the Jews who should reign over them and all the nations for ever, "should pour out his soul unto death" as "an offering for sin," as the result of his being wounded and bruised for the transgressions and iniquities of God's people; that though numbered with transgressors, in coming to his death, in the rich man's sepulchre should be his tomb (Isaiah liii. 9), and that he should awake early (Ps. lvii. 3, 8) in the morning from the sleep of death without seeing corruption, to the enjoyment of life and pleasures for evermore.—[Ps. xvi. 10, 11.] These testimonies predicted the death, burial, and resurrection of the King of the Jews, or the Christ, which is the same thing. In the fulness of time, Jesus came; and having established his right to the throne of David, died, was buried, and rose again. The things concentrated in these *facts* being accomplished, this partial fulfilment leaves all the rest of the gospel still a *matter of promise.* This unfulfilled portion of gospel is its hope; which, with the facts and mystery based upon them, is the subject-matter of "the faith" which justifies.

"The mystery of the seven stars, and the seven golden lamps. The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches; and the seven lamps are the seven churches." We quote this text to show the use of the word "mystery." It is evidently employed here for meaning: the hidden meaning of the seven stars is the messengers of the seven churches—the seven lamps mean or signify the seven churches. The mystery of the gospel is the meaning or signification of its accomplished facts, as interpreted by Jehovah; and, by his authority concentrated in an institution, through which the benefits of those facts may be imparted to those who believe the gospel of the kingdom, and its mystery.

The mystery revealed through the apostles, though unknown to the prophets and angels, was then, as it is now, still an element of the gospel of the kingdom. It was there when preached to Abraham, but hidden; it is there yet, only revealed. The gospel of the

kingdom is the major term; the mystery the lesser. The gospel of the kingdom contains the mystery; but the mystery does not contain the gospel of the kingdom. Hence, Jesus did not say: "Go into all the world, and preach the mystery of the gospel; he that believes the mystery and is baptised, shall be saved;" but, "Go and preach the gospel;" for he that believed this, apostolically ministered, would believe the gospel of the kingdom, its facts and mystery.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God," said Jesus. To seek a certain thing first implies that there is something else to be sought afterward; we may then enquire: "What next shall we seek?" To this, the great Teacher replies: "And God's righteousness." What is this? It is that "robe of righteousness" He has provided for the covering of those who have sought the kingdom and have found it.—(Isai xli. 10.) It is God's sin covering (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2), the robe made white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. vii. 14; xix. 8), the righteousness of God witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, through belief of Jesus Christ, for all and upon all believing the gospel.—(Rom. iii. 21, 22; i. 15, 16). The righteousness of God is "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," which He has appointed for those who believe the gospel of the kingdom. He has sent him forth as a *blood-sprinkled mercy seat*, through faith in which *they* may have remission of past sins, and be thus invested with the wedding garment.—(Mat. xxii. 11-14). Those who are not covered with the robe of righteousness which God has constructed; or being covered, do not "keep their garments," that is, preserve their robes from defilement—are said in Scriptures to *walk naked*.—(Rev. xvi. 15; iii. 17, 18). Believers and unbelievers, who have not put on the robe of God's righteousness, are clothed in filthy rags of scarlet or crimson dye, and may say with Israel, as at present circumstanced, "We are all unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." They are uncovered with the garments of salvation, and having no clothing but things of their own invention, are naked before God, and certain, if they remain so, to be put to shame at the coming of His king.

Jesus the Christ, or Anointed King of Israel, is the righteousness of those who, believing the gospel of the kingdom and its mystery, *put him on*.—(Gal. iii. 27.) Hence in regard to them, he is styled "JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."—(Jer. xxiii. 6). When a believer

puts him on, he is said to be "*in him*," and when in him, to be "constituted the righteousness of God in Him."—(2 Col. v. 21). Seek, then, in the first place, to understand the Word of the kingdom (Matt. xiii. 23, 13-15); and after accomplishing that, seek to be constituted the righteousness of God in its King; and all things shall be added to you.—(Matt. vi. 33.) This is the order laid down by Jesus, an order which cannot be improved.

All the sufferings of the apostles inflicted by their own countrymen, were on account of the mystery of the gospel. *Israel*, like the angels and prophets, were ignorant of this hidden element of their hope; and when it was demonstrated by the apostles, they would not receive it. The mystery was as much a part of the hope of Israel as the kingdom. It was the mystery of the hope as well as the mystery of the gospel; for before Christ came, the gospel was all a matter of hope; so that the mystery was hidden in the hope of the nation, as the greater includes the less. This identity of "the mystery of Christ" with the hope of Israel, is apparent from the reason assigned by the apostle for his loss of liberty. In writing to the Ephesians, Paul says, "For *the mystery of the gospel* I am an ambassador in bonds;" to the Colossians also he says, "For *the mystery of Christ* I am in bonds;" and to the elders of the synagogue at Rome he said, "For *the hope of Israel* am I bound with this chain."—(Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3; Acts xxviii. 20.) Now the apostle was not an ambassador in chains for three different things, but for one thing, even for "the hope AND resurrection of the dead." "I stand," said he, "and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers, unto which our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake I am accused of the Jews."—[Acts xxvi. 6, 7; xxiii. 6]. This hope of the Twelve Tribes, or hope of Israel, proclaimed in the name of Jesus as King of the Jews, was the sole ground of the apostle's tribulation. He suffered for nothing else; it is therefore clear that the mystery of the gospel, "the mysteries of the kingdom," and the mystery of Christ, are but different forms of speech expressive of the same thing.

The mystery, then, is the meaning of the gospel facts concentrated into a focus of power, which is THE NAME OF JESUS, "than which there is none other under heaven given among men, whereby they can be

saved." His name comprehends everything that can be scripturally affirmed of him. It is a part of his name that he is that Son of David who was to be also Son of God, and King of the Jews on David's throne for the age. This is tantamount to saying that Jesus is the Christ. This truth is the foundation corner stone [Eph. ii. 20,] of the mystery. It is also part of his name that his "blood cleanses from all sin," through his resurrection from the dead, those who believe the gospel; for "he was delivered for their offences, and raised again for their justification.—[Rom. iv. 25.] The believer of the gospel of the kingdom, then, who with an honest and good heart believes also that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God; that a fountain was opened in his blood for sin and for uncleanness [Zech. xiii. 1], when he suffered death upon the accursed tree; that he was buried; and that he rose again upon the third day, according to the Scriptures, for the justification of the faithful unto eternal life; such a one believes the gospel in its hope, facts, and mystery, and is prepared to become "the righteousness of God," by putting on, and so becoming an element of, the Name of Jesus Christ. A believer who is constituted the righteousness of God in Jesus, is one to whom repentance and the remission of sins has been granted in his name. The institution of the name is the sin-cleansing mystery of the gospel of the kingdom. Such a thing had never been heard of before in Israel. They had heard of John's baptism: "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;" but of repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins—this was a secret which prophet nor angel had ever heard till the Holy Spirit revealed it on Pentecost by the mouth of Peter.—[Acts ii. 38].

But how does a sinner become the subject of repentance and the remission of sins in the name of Jesus? How does he put on and become a constituent of the name? There is but one way of accomplishing this indispensable and essential necessity, or condition of salvation. He must first become a believer of the hope, facts, and mystery of the gospel; for without faith—a faith that works by love and purifies the heart—it is impossible to please God.—(Heb. xi. 6; Acts xv. 9; Gal. v. 6.) Being thus prepared, he may then be immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This act unites the believer of

the true gospel to the Name; so that in being united, his faith and child-like disposition are counted to him for repentance and remission of sins, and he becomes an heir of the kingdom and glory of God, which are promised to him for ever. Thus, "he that believes the gospel and is baptised, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be condemned."—(Mark xvi. 15, 16.)

In conclusion, then, the great salvation exhibited in the gospel of the kingdom is national and individual. As a national salvation, it delivers the nations from those that oppress them; suppresses vice, superstition, and crime; restrains evil; abolishes war; establishes justice and righteousness in the earth; and consummates a social regeneration of the world, which shall be "glory in the highest heavens to God; over earth, peace and goodwill among men."

As an individual salvation, it saves believers of the gospel promises, facts, and mystery, from sin, sins, and the wages of sin, which is death. It saves them from sins which are past, when they become the subject of repentance and remission in the name of Jesus; and it saves them from sin in the flesh, and the consequences of it, when they arise from the death-state to possess the kingdom of God. This is a great and wonderful deliverance; a salvation from all the ills of flesh, personal and relative. What possibility is there of escape, if this be neglected? We know of none. The Bible reveals none; and a salvation-doctrine not inscribed in light upon its sacred page, is unworthy of a wise man's consideration.

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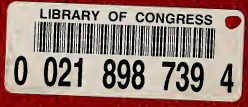
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